PRAYER AND PRAISE FOR THE KING;

CONSIDERED IN A

SERMON

OCCASIONED BY HIS MAJESTY's HAPPY RECOVERY FROM HIS GREAT AFFLICTION.

PREACHED APRIL 26th, AT NEW-COURT, CAREY-STREET,

~~1779~~ 1789.

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PREFACE.

IF, in perusing the following plain Discourse, the Heart of the serious Reader should be excited to pray more fervently for our gracious Sovereign, and to render Thanksgiving to GOD for his seasonable and wonderful Recovery, the Design of the aged Author in publishing it will be answered.

In the Variety of Instruments which compose a Concert of Musick, (to which the many Sermons, printed on the present delightful Event, may be compared) the *smallest* contributes to make up the Harmony. *Psalm* cxlviii. "Young Men and "Maidens, old Men and Children; let "them praise the Name of the LORD."

R. W.

Took's-court,
Cursitor-street.

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SERMON, &c.

1 TIM. ii. 1, 2.

I exhort, therefore, that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made—for KINGS.

ONE of the charges brought by the Jews against our blessed Redeemer was, that he was an enemy to civil government. They accused him at Pilate's bar, that he had forbidden them to give tribute to Cesar: Nothing could be more false, for he had expresly enjoined them, to render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's.

The same charge was also laid against his apostles; they were represented as men dangerous to the State, and disturbers of the publick tranquillity. To obviate this calumny, we need

only to turn to thoſe paſſages of Scripture in which obedience to Magiſtrates is inculcated and inforced. *Tit.* iii. 1. " Put them in mind " to be ſubject to principalities and powers," &c. 1 *Pet.* ii. 13. " Submit yourſelves to every " ordinance of man for the LORD's ſake; whe- " ther it be to the King, as Supreme." Though the particular form of government for the nations of men is not preſcribed in the Scriptures, magiſtracy itſelf is of divine inſtitution; the powers that be are ordained of GOD; and neceſſary it is for the well-being of communities, from that of a ſingle family to the largeſt nation in the world, that ſome ſhould bear rule, and others be in ſubjection.

Now, among the duties which we owe to thoſe who are inveſted with civil authority, the text tells us, are ſupplications, prayers, interceſſions, and giving of thanks to GOD for them. By way of explanation obſerve, 1. The ſeveral words the apoſtle here uſes to point out the diſtinct partso f prayer.

2. The Perſons for whom we are exhorted thus to pray.

I then deſign more particularly to treat the ſubject as it ſuits the happy and joyful occaſion upon which I make choice of it.

1. Obſerve the ſeveral words the apoſtle here uſes to point out the diſtinct parts of prayer. They are four; ſupplications, prayers, inter-

ceſſions, and giving of thanks. The word *ſupplications* in this place means the offering up of our deſires to GOD, that he would be pleaſed to prevent and remove evil; when we fear trouble, that he would avert it; and when we feel it, that he would deliver us out of it. Hereby we acknowledge that evil, both natural and penal, is of the LORD. *Amos* iii. 6. "*Shall* "*there be evil in a city,*" in a family, in a palace, in any country whatſoever, "*and the Lord has* "*not done it?*" And as he cauſes it to light on a perſon, or a people, and to continue ſo long as he will, he is therefore to be ſupplicated for it's removal; and particularly for the taking away of ſin, the greateſt evil.

Again. The apoſtle uſes the word *prayers*; by which we are to underſtand petitions preſented to GOD for thoſe peculiar mercies which are needed; and who does not ſtand in need of freſh favours from his bountiful hand every day? Therefore it is our duty every day to aſk them of him who is the FATHER of mercies, and the GOD of all comfort. The Pſalmiſt ſays in *Pſal.* xxxii. 6. "Every one that is godly "will pray to him;" they then who live without prayer, live without GOD in the world.

Another word the apoſtle uſes is *interceſſions*, which all know means praying for others. To confine our prayers to our own perſonal caſes,

it would discover a very selfish spirit: from such a spirit they who are endued with divine grace are delivered; they cannot but pour out their hearts before God on behalf of others; and in doing this, they experience benefit themselves.

The fourth word which the apostle uses is *giving of thanks*. Though this looks like a distinct duty from prayer, yet it is indeed a branch of it; it grows out of the same root, and should never be separated from it; for in our prayers we are to praise God. *Phil.* iv. 6. "In every thing by prayer and supplication "with thanksgiving, let your request be made "known to God." When you implore blessings which you want, never forget those which you already possess. There is always cause to be thankful, even in the greatest necessity, and the deepest affliction; for we are at no time destitute of mercy. Were our hearts impressed with a conviction of the punishment which our iniquities deserve, the smallest favour from the hand of God would excite gratitude. Every day of our lives should, in a sense, be a day of thanksgiving; and there are some seasons wherein we are peculiarly called by divine Providence to engage in this delightful work.

2. Observe, the persons for whom we are exhorted to pray in the manner here expressed.

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The paſſage before us ſays, *for all men*; for the multitudes of the human race ~~whom~~ whom over ignorance, idolatry and ſuperſtition have the dominion. We are to intercede with GOD for theſe our fellow mortals, that he would introduce the light of the goſpel of CHRIST among them; and where this great light already ſhines, that he would continue and increaſe it: And when the judgments of GOD are abroad in the earth, it is our duty to pray, that the inhabitants of the world may learn righteouſneſs. We are alſo to give thanks for the mercies they receive from GOD.

The apoſtle having exhorted that ſupplications, prayers, interceſſions and thankſgivings be offered up for mankind in general, comes next to ſpeak of men of high degree; pray thus for *Kings*; intercede for them perſonally, and be thankful for the ordinance of GOD, which in itſelf is a bleſſing; without this inſtitution nothing but anarchy would prevail. By Kings here ſpecified we are primarily to underſtand the Roman Emperors; even bloody Nero, whom the apoſtle calls a lion, becauſe of his ſavage diſpoſition, and the cruelties he executed. For ſuch tyrants the Chriſtians in thoſe days were exhorted to pray, according to this direction. And when it is added, *for all that are in authority*, the meaning is, for all thoſe who were

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deputed to ſuperintend the provinces of the Empire; and I ſuppoſe, generally ſpeaking, as he was who ſat on the throne, ſo were they who repreſented him. The vileſt of men need the prayers of the beſt; and when perſons of this character are exalted to exerciſe dominion, they ſhould be prayed for, that the ends for which Magiſtracy is appointed of GOD might be anſwered by them, viz. for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well; that we may lead a peaceable and quiet life in all godlineſs and honeſty; encouraged in the performance of our duty both to GOD and man.

I now proceed to what I chiefly intend, which is to treat the ſubject as it ſuits the occaſion upon which I have taken it.

The Day of Thankſgiving appointed by Authority, we could not with convenience and ſolemnity obſerve in this place of worſhip, for a reaſon well known to you. Yet as a teſtimony of affection and loyalty to our beloved Sovereign, it was judged decent and neceſſary, that a publick attention ſhould be paid to the Royal Proclamation, as on this day. Under the Moſaic law the fourteenth day of the firſt month was fixed for celebrating the Paſſover; but it ſo happened on account of circumſtances which aroſe, that ſome could not keep the feſtival on the

the day appointed; they were allowed therefore to obſerve it at another time. I mention it not as a parallel caſe, but only to ſhew, that it was not out of diſreſpect in the leaſt to Government, that Thankſgivings were not offered to God in this place on the day commanded, but poſtponed to this day; which is done in ſeveral other congregations. I will ſay with confidence, that during the King's alarming affliction, our interceſſions at the throne of grace on his behalf were ſincere and fervent; and now he is raiſed up, and enabled perſonally to exerciſe his royal authority again, we as ſincerely rejoice, and do ardently preſent our thankſgivings to God on his account. With admiring and adoring gratitude we cry out, What has God wrought!

Suppoſe, my friends, any of your family were dangerouſly afflicted in mind or body, eſpecially the head of an houſehold, and prayer ſhould be anſwered, would not your ſoul rejoice, and be thankful for ſo wonderful a mercy? In the affecting caſe before us, can we forget the great things which God has done for us, and at ſo critical a time?

Let us look back on the days of tribulation, and recollect our concern for ourſelves, and the publick.

In the firſt place, I ſhall lay before you the Exhortation to ſupplicate, pray and intercede for the King.—I would juſt premiſe, that the Exhortation of the inſpired apoſtle is as binding on us as any Injunction or Commandment of CHRIST himſelf. 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 1, 2. "We exhort "you by the LORD JESUS; and ye know what "commandments we gave you by the LORD "JESUS." Exhortations of Scripture have the force of precepts. Here is one of the laws of CHRIST's kingdom, which is to be obeyed becauſe he has enacted it; not only that we offer prayers in general, but alſo make interceſſion for Rulers in particular. They therefore who never pray for the civil magiſtrate, under whoſe protection they live, are diſobedient to the King of kings. They are as chargeable with ſin, a ſin of omiſſion, as if they did not pray at all; and muſt anſwer for it before their Judge. Conſider then, I ſay, here is an order from the throne of heaven, an expreſs commandment which binds our conſciences, that we make interceſſion for them whom the Providence of GOD has placed in authority over us; and that it is not one of the leaſt of the divine commandments, is evident, from the manner in which the apoſtle introduces the ſubject; I exhort, that *firſt of all*, ſupplications, &c. It is an article among the chief things, a

duty

duty of the firſt importance in practical religion; we are principally concerned in it. In praying for our Governors, we do in effect pray for our own happineſs; as we may learn from *Jer.* xxix. 7. where the prophet, in the Name of GOD, commanded the Jews in Babylon, "Seek ye the peace of the city, whither I have "cauſed you to be carried away captive, and "pray to the LORD for it; for in the peace "thereof ye ſhall have peace;" which implies praying for Magiſtrates, who are the Conſervators of the publick tranquillity.

Now, as prayers and interceſſions are required to be offered up to GOD in the cloſet, in the family and in the congregation, it will follow from hence, that it is incumbent on us to pray for the perſons whom the apoſtle deſcribes, in private as well as in publick. If ſecret and family prayer be divinely commanded, then, I ſay, it is our duty to intercede for our Rulers at thoſe ſeaſons: And I doubt not this was conſcientiouſly attended to by thoſe who have an intereſt at the Throne of Grace, more abundantly, in the deep affliction with which it pleaſed the Moſt High to viſit our Gracious Sovereign. When we were fully informed of the nature of his malady, what a gloom ſpread over our countenances, ariſing from the ſorrow of our hearts? and how ſolicitous were we to

know from day to day the Reports that were publickly made by his Phyſicians?—You, my friends, who know by experience the Spirit of grace and ſupplications, were ſenſible, that this ſevere indiſpoſition proceeded more immediately from the hand of GOD; to Him therefore you prayed with fervour of ſoul for his recovery. You knew that a life ſo important, and of ſuch great utility to his kingdoms, demanded the moſt ardent ſupplications to the LORD of heaven and earth. You began to tremble for fear of conſequences. Proviſion muſt be made for the ſettlement of publick affairs during the King's incapacity. The manner how this was to be accompliſhed, occaſioned different opinions and wide diſſentions in the Senate. At length, thoſe meaſures were wiſely adopted and determined upon, which ſuited the preſent exigence. And juſt as a new form of adminiſtration was ready to take effect, at the very juncture when we ardently wiſhed and prayed, that our Sovereign were able to re-aſſume the reins of Government, GOD, in his adorable goodneſs to this country, was graciouſly pleaſed to reſtore and capacitate him again to attend to the weighty concerns of his kingdoms. Thus, while our interceſſions from week to week were aſcending to heaven, deliverance was working out for us; and the mercy, ſo much wanted,

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broke forth like the ſun from a dark and diſmal cloud that ſeemed to threaten a dreadful ſtorm. What ſhall we render to the LORD for this ſeaſonable benefit? ſeaſonable to our excellent and amiable Queen, to the Royal Family, and to his Majeſty's ſubjects in general.

Thus I am brought to conſider the duty of Thankſgiving.

It is divinely injoined, that *we give thanks for Kings*; that is, for Government which GOD has ordained for the good of the Community at large, be the titles of them who execute it what they may; ſurely then for *ſuch* Kings as theſe Iſlands have been ruled by, ever ſince the Glorious Revolution by William the Third, for ſuch Kings as the Almighty has bleſt theſe nations with from the Illuſtrious Houſe of Hanover. Let the Name of JEHOVAH be praiſed for the Reigning Prince, who makes the laws of the land the rule of his Government; who, inſtead of invading the rights of conſcience, and the liberties of human nature, maintains them inviolably; a firm Friend of the law of Toleration, and the Father of his people. He has very lately declared, that *Proteſtant Diſſenters will always experience his favour and protection.*— There is no need of reminding you of his Majeſty's perſonal and domeſtic virtues, his habitual temperance and ſobriety, and above all,

his conſtant acknowledgment of God, before whom he has in a very ſolemn manner proſtrated himſelf.

For ſuch a King to be ſo afflicted, as to be incapable of exerciſing lawful authority, which is his delight; what ingenuous mind could but mourn and weep? And now, that God has exemplified his gracious character as the Hearer of Prayer, what ſtrong and lively emotions of gratitude ſhould diffuſe themſelves through all our ſouls? for I hinted before, the work of Thankſgiving is not to be confined to a day. It is a national deliverance; and as individuals we are intereſted in it, and partakers of it. The nearer the welfare of our country, and the proſperity of our Zion lie to our hearts, the deeper will be our ſenſe of the divine Goodneſs, and the warmer our Thankſgivings for this wonderful reſtoration.

But in what manner are we to teſtify our gratitude? External demonſtrations of joy are decent; but by no means are we to indulge in ſuch criminal exceſſes as gluttony and drunkenneſs; this were to provoke and not pleaſe either our Maker, or our King. When God requires us to give thanks to him for the bleſſing we commemorate, it includes (1) our cultivating and cheriſhing a ſenſe of it, as proceeding from his Almighty Hand.

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The aſſiſtance of one phyſician after another was called in, and they did their utmoſt; but their ſkill was baffled: at length ſuitable proviſion was made, and the means uſed were efficacious; but who infuſed the bleſſing? not man, but GOD.—If we be cordially thankful in any caſe, the Firſt Cauſe will be properly regarded. *Job* v. 18. "He woundeth, and his "hands make whole;" and we read in *Pſalm* cxliv. 10. "It is he that giveth ſalvation to "kings;" to allude to the paſſage, the word *ſalvation* is in *Pſal.* xlii. ii. rendered *health.* It is GOD that heals; and in the preſent caſe we may ſay, it is the LORD's doing, and marvellous in our eyes.

(2) If, from the heart, we give thanks to GOD for any mercy, whether perſonal or publick, it is attended with a ſenſe of our unworthineſs.

The patriarch Jacob ſaid, I am not worthy of the leaſt of all the mercies, which thou haſt ſhewed to thy ſervant.

A due conſideration of the abounding infidelity and immorality of theſe kingdoms, were enough to excite our wonder at the patience of the Moſt High. For an hundred years we have been indulged, by his good Providence, with civil and religious liberty; and juſt at the ſeaſon when we were commemorating that joyful event,

event, the anger of the LORD ſeemed to be kindled againſt us; which, by the way, may give us this caution, "*to rejoice with trembling.*" I readily own, my mind was filled with painful apprehenſions of the event; I mean, there was a proſpect of ſuch an inundation of deiſm, ſabbath-breaking, debauchery, diſſipation and folly, as would provoke the Almighty to bring ſome terrible judgment on the land. And even as matters now ſtand, our moral character is ſo bad, that we ought to acknowledge, it is owing entirely to the great mercy of the LORD, that we continue to ſit under a Government, equitable, mild and benevolent.

(3.) GOD requires that our Thankſgivings ſhould be offered to him in the name of JESUS CHRIST.

Eph. v. 20. "Giving thanks always for all "things unto GOD and the FATHER, in the "name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST." If *always* in his name, then at the preſent time; if *for all things*, then for the good Government which is our protection. We may ſay of civil and religious liberty, that it is a bleſſing purchaſed by the blood of the SON of GOD. *John* viii. 32. "The Truth ſhall make you free." Our Thankſgivings cannot be evangelical, conſequently not acceptable to GOD, unleſs they are preſented with faith in CHRIST the only Mediator.

tor. *Heb.* xiii. 15. " By him therefore let us " offer the ſacrifice of praiſe to GOD conti- " nually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving " thanks to his name."

Again (4.) GOD requires that our Thankſgivings ſhould be practical; that we live, as well as utter his praiſes.

As a mere verbal confeſſion of ſin, is not genuine repentance; ſo neither is ſaying, GOD, I thank thee, real gratitude. If it come from the heart, the life will be uniform. Inſtead of doing thoſe things which bring a reproach on our chriſtian profeſſion, we ſhall walk ſo as to be a credit to it. It is a true ſaying, that the Thankſgiving which GOD demands is Thankſliving. *Pſal.* li. 23. " Whoſo offers praiſe glo- " rifies me; and to him that orders his conver- " ſation aright, will I ſhew the ſalvation of " GOD."

Well then, let the Exhortation in the text be regarded as the voice of GOD, ſpeaking to us all. Pray for the king; make conſcience of it, for it is the commandment of GOD our Saviour; and it is good and acceptable in his ſight. Alſo give thanks for him, that he has been continued to reign ſo long as twenty-eight years over us; eſpecially, let us aſcribe glory to GOD for the late ſignal interpoſition in his favour. *Pſal.* xviii. 49, 50. " I will give thanks unto thee,

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" O LORD, and ſing praiſes to thy name. Great " deliverance gives he to his King. GOD has " not dealt ſo with any nation; praiſe ye the " LORD."

I ſhall now cloſe the diſcourſe with obſerving (1.) In the malady wherewith our dear and dread Sovereign was afflicted, we ſee, as in a glaſs, the vanity of worldly magnificence. How tranſitory are human honours! how ſoon may a palace be made an houſe of mourning! *Job* xxxvi. 8. " Kings may be holden in cords of " affliction." *Pſalm* cxlvi. 3. " Put not your " truſt in Princes, nor in the ſon of man, in " whom there is no help."

(2.) In the marvellous recovery of the King, we are inſtructed, that nothing is too hard for the LORD.

He that formed the ſpirit of man within him, has immediate and conſtant acceſs to it. He that makes a breach on the powers of body and mind, can eaſily repair it; to allude to *Job* xii. 18. " He looſeth the bonds of Kings." Be your difficulties ever ſo preſſing, GOD has power to ſupport and deliver you.

Laſtly. As the LORD has been far better to us than our fears, and has turned our prayers into praiſe, what encouragement have we to truſt in him at all times, to pour out our hearts before

before him, and call upon him ſo long as we live?

The LORD grant that the valuable life of our Sovereign may be lengthened out, and be precious in his ſight; that with reputation to himſelf, and comfort to his ſubjects, he may ſway the ſceptre for many years; and that at laſt he may be prepared for, and admitted to a crown of glory that fades not away. Amen.

THE END.

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